

Mission permanente
de l'État du Qatar
auprès de l'Office
des Nations-Unies à Genève



الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر
لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة
جنيف

**STATEMENT OF
HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE STATE OF QATAR**

**H.E. Professor Juhaina Sultan Saif Al-Easa
Deputy Chairperson of the Board of The
Supreme Council for Family Affairs**

To The

**57th Session of The Committee on The Elimination of Discrimination
Against Women**

**Discussion of the Initial Report on the State of Qatar
Under Article 18 of CEDAW**

13 February 2014

United Nations Palace – Geneva

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT THE MERCIFUL

Excellency,

President of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished audience,

I wish to begin by expressing, on behalf of my country's delegation, our delight for meeting with your honorable committee today to discuss the initial report of the State of Qatar, submitted under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). I would also like to express to you the appreciation of the State of Qatar for the important role your honorable committee is playing in assisting the States parties to improve, strengthen and enhance their commitment to and implementation of the provisions of this Convention. We assure you in this regard of the full support and cooperation of the State of Qatar for this Committee.

The Qatari Cedaw Report is the result of coordination and cooperation in the area of monitoring of the implementation of CEDAW among all agencies concerned with women. It was prepared by the National Commission set up by the esteemed Council of Ministers at its 39th Ordinary Meeting in 2009, held on 30/12/2009, under the chairmanship of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the participation of several governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with human rights in general and women rights in particular.

Madam / Mr. President,

The State of Qatar is fully confident in your ability to steward the work of this Committee to success in achieving the hopes and aspirations pinned on it in supporting women advancement and progress.

It is therefore an honour for me today to be the head of the Qatar delegation charged to discuss its initial national report on the legislative, judicial and administrative and other measures taken

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at the national level to implement the provisions of CEDAW and the progress made in areas relating to women affairs.

The official delegation of the State of Qatar comprises representatives of relevant government agencies and civil society organisations as follows: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Emiri Court, Supreme Council for Education, Supreme Council for Health, Supreme Council for Family Affairs, and Qatari Foundation for Social Protection and Rehabilitation.

This reflects joint efforts and synergy to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women, in implementation of the provisions of the Convention, as a definitive affirmation of transparency and the State of Qatar's respect for and implementation of its obligations and international commitments.

Madam / Mr. President
Distinguished Members,

Promotion and protection of human rights, including women rights, is a strategic choice for the State as it constitutes the backbone of the comprehensive "constitutional, economic, social and cultural" reform policy being pursued by the State. This was underscored in the comprehensive vision for development "Qatar National Vision 2030, adopted under Emiri Decree No. 44 (2008), which involves important human right topics in education, the environment, immigrant labour rights, rights of the child, and women empowerment. The vision emphasized the "promotion of women's capacities and empowering them for economic and political participation, especially in relation to decision-making."

It was also emphasized by the adoption of the decision of the Council of Ministers on 15/4/2009, with the approval of the State of Qatar's population policy implemented under the umbrella of Qatar National Vision 2030, which includes topics on the empowerment of women, children, youth and the elderly. It also includes policies affirming women's rights in general and takes into account the interest of citizens and non-citizen residents of Qatar.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I say citizens and residents because our country's population composition has some exceptional characteristics. Foreigners from all parts of the world constitute the overwhelming majority of our population, with men taking up three-quarters of the population. It is sufficient to mention that the population of the State of Qatar jumped from 744,000 in 2004 to



1.7 million in 2010 and it is today more than 2 million; that is the number tripled in the course of 10 years. The reason for this high rate of population growth and the proportion of men is the growing number of young foreign workers recruited by the State to meet the needs of its ambitious development plans, including projects relating to the hosting of the 2022 world cup tournament.

This exceptional population composition presents the State with huge tasks in the areas of human rights in general and women rights in particular. The State of Qatar has always strived to pursue an advanced policy on human rights promotion, entrenching the concepts of the rule of law, good governance and defense of freedom and democratic values at all regional and international fora. This reflects the depth of real attention the State of Qatar gives to regional and international efforts to entrench these lofty values.

This explains the State's high level of interest in international conventions and treaties, especially those relating to human rights. And this is affirmed in Article 68 of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar, which provides that all conventions and treaties signed by the State of Qatar shall have the force of law once they have been ratified and published in the Official Gazette.

The firm belief of the State of Qatar in the promotion and protection of all human rights was the drive for its great attention to international conventions and treaties on human rights, and it was given practical expression through accession to most of the basic human rights conventions. Some of these are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995), International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (1976), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2009).

As an expression of the genuine interest of the State of Qatar in abiding by this convention and effectively bringing it into force, it avoided making blanket reservation as to the Convention, but only made partial reservation on some paragraphs in some articles, some of which may be the subject of review in the future.

Madam / Mr. President
Distinguished Audience,

Part III of Qatar's 2004 Constitution (Articles 34 – 58) is devoted to fundamental rights and freedoms. The Constitution recognizes that these are integrated, interrelated, interdependent and



indivisible, and thus guarantees economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights as well as collective rights such as the right to development.

The Constitution provides that these rights can neither be restricted nor diminished on the grounds of regulation or amendment. Article 146 stipulates that the provisions on public rights and freedoms cannot be amended unless the purpose of such amendment is to grant additional safeguards to citizens.

Fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution have been strengthened through the enactment of a set of national laws. These include but are not limited to: Punishments Act, Criminal Procedures Act, Labour Act, Private Associations and Institutions Act, Public Prosecution Act, Judicial Authority Act.

**Madam / Mr. President
Distinguished Members,**

The State of Qatar's approach has always been to strive and translate treaty provisions from the realm of theoretical text to the realm of effective implementation in order to promote and protect all the rights involved and prevent any violations of those rights.

Allow me to present a summary of some of the challenges the State of Qatar encountered and the achievements it has recorded in the implementation of treaty provisions:

Legislations:

Ensuring the harmonization of national legislations with international treaties ratified by the State remains one of the challenges the country faces, especially under the situation where the number of foreigners in the country is greater than that of the citizens, as already mentioned. As a result, the State reviews existing legislations regularly so that they can be in line with relevant human rights treaties in general and the promotion and protection of women rights and empowering them, in particular. This is done through the enactment of a set of national legislations ensuring non-discrimination against women , and recently was issued law Act No. 15 of 2011 on Combating Human Trafficking; and Act No 1 of 2014 of the Nurseries Regulations .

Institutional Framework:

The State is keen to establish local mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the provisions of this treaty, whether at the level of the Government or civil society organizations. The State



established several institutions and gave the civil society the opportunity to participate effectively in this regard, as addressed in detail in the report before you.

These mechanisms can be categorized as follows:

- **Independent Mechanisms:** The most important of these is the National Human Rights Committee established by Emiri Decree No. 38 of 2002 as an independent national institution concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights. Decree-Law No. 17 of 2010 was promulgated to structure the Committee with the aim of giving it additional safeguards and jurisdictions so that it would be in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles).

The State of Qatar is the first Gulf state to establish a national body for the promotion and protection of human rights in compliance with the above-mentioned Paris Principles. The Committee is also accredited as a Category-A national institution concerned with the promotion and respect of human rights in accordance with the procedures of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights for accreditation of those institutions. The Government grants the recommendations of the National Human Rights Committee the necessary attention and implements them.

The establishment of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue is one of the fruits of the recommendations of the 5th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue held in May 2007. The Center seeks to disseminate and promote the culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence among various religions and cultures.

In the same regard the Qatar Committee for Alliance of Civilisations was established; and since 2009, it has adopted a plan that is renewed regularly with the objective of promoting alliance of various Civilisations in the areas of education, youth, migration and media.

- **Governmental Mechanisms:**

The most important of these is the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, established under Emiri Decree No. 53 of 1998 as an independent higher body concerned with promoting the role of the family and women in society. It designs strategies, policies and plans, ensuring the follow-up of their implementation, and is directly affiliated to the Council of His Highness the Emir. The Council was restructured under Emiri Decree No. 15 of 2009. Since its inception, the Council has been able to record great achievements in the area of women advancement, especially in the



legislative domain. It played a fundamental and prominent role in the promulgation of many legislations and the amendment of others in order to guarantee women rights. Its efforts in realizing the accession of the State of Qatar to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are undeniable. The Council also completed a huge number of programmes, studies and research works which contributed to heightening attention for issues of women and persons with disabilities, in particular. Among the governmental institutions concerned with women empowerment is the Permanent Population Committee, which follows up the population policy of the State of Qatar and deals with all categories of the population, especially women and children.

• **Civil Society Mechanisms:**

Aware of the role of the civil society and its effective participation in the advancement and respect of women in the Qatari society, many non-profit institutions have been established. They work on the protection and promotion of the rights of certain sections of the society for whose sake they was established. These include but are not limited to Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women; Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking; and Center for Social Rehabilitation.

In August 2013, Qatar Foundation for Social Work was established. Generally this aims to develop the civil society institutions active in the area of social work, boost and upgrade their capacities, and enhance their role in society. It also aims to develop strategies, policies and programmes aiding the development of those foundations to enable them achieve the objectives for which they were established.

**Madam / Mr. President
Distinguished Members,**

At the level of national strategies, the State of Qatar adopted a National Development Strategy (2011-2016), which is a mechanism that systematically translates Qatar National Vision 2030 into reality through the prioritization of programs and projects to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the State of Qatar.

Perhaps one of the 14 most important sectoral strategies contained in the National Development Strategy is the family cohesion and women empowerment sector (2011-2016). This strategy aims to maintain a strong family that enjoys social support and protection, where women would have



an active role in all facets of life, especially in terms of participating in economic and social decision-making. This strategy has identified eight developmental outcomes, including: (greater empowerment of women). Under this rubric fall two themes, namely: increasing the number of women in leadership positions, and establishing a number of civil society organizations that promote women's issues. This is what the State seeks to achieve in an appropriate and effective manner.

It should be noted that the State of Qatar has achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals before the set period between 1990 and 2015. Poverty and hunger have been eradicated, and the State of Qatar's Human Development Index has surpassed that of its counterparts in many developed countries. Basic education has become universal; while gender equality and women empowerment have been promoted, including the eradication of gender disparities in education. Women equality in the Qatari labour force and increased participation of women in public life have been achieved. Child and maternal mortality have been reduced alongside combating HIV (AIDS), malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Environmental sustainability is ensured and global development partnership is built.

In education, the State has ensured that opportunity is made available to girls to enroll in different specialties at various stages according to their desires through study scholarship abroad or at home, whether in the various faculties of Qatar University or at any of the independent universities that have established branches in Qatar, including the University of Calgary, North Atlantic College as well as specialized universities in the Education City of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development & Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

In addition to the foregoing, a community college was established in the State of Qatar in May 2010. The College offers services to students in three main areas: (1) Diploma in Arts and Sciences, (2) Diploma in Applied Science, (3) and Training and Personal Development courses. Since it was established, the College has witnessed growing demand from both genders. Enrollment at the College increased from 307 male and female students in the autumn of 2010/2011 to 1936 students in the autumn of 2013/2014, with girls constituting more than 50% of the total enrolled students.

A national education and training strategy (2011-2016) was developed. This covers general education starting from kindergarten and ending at the twelfth grade. It also extends to higher education, vocational and technical training, and training for workers in the field of education. This strategy covers 21 outcomes, aiming to improve general and higher education and training



and to increase vocational guidance and academic skills required in the work environments for different students of both sexes on an equal footing. This is affirmed in Articles 25, 34 and 49 of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar.

It should be noted that the size of government spending on education grew from 9.86 % of total government spending in 2011/2012 to 10.26 % of total government spending in 2012/2013. Government spending on education also constitutes 3.0% of the country's total GDP for the year 2012/2013.

Qatar has adopted a pioneering policy in the promotion of scientific research by allocating 2.8% of GDP to research and the establishment of a Qatar fund to sponsor scientific research, and another *waqf* (endowment) fund to be spent on education from the investment share of Qatar's gas assets.

In the health field: The budget of the 2013/2014 financial year included an increase of 13% to achieve better levels of healthcare services. A primary healthcare strategy was also adopted to become a national priority to improve the health system and double the number of health centers in the next five years, while expanding and diversifying medical services, in particular preventive services.

It should be noted that Act No. 7 of 2013 on Social Health Insurance System was recently promulgated to ensure the provision of health services to all Qatari citizens, citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the country's residents and visitors.

In the economic field, women who run enterprises and businesses in various economic sectors, and particularly in the public sector, had their rate increased from 19.2% in 2008 to 27.2% in 2011.

Participation in public life and international representation: During the course of the past years, it has become clear that there is a supporting political will to empower the Qatar women and enhance their participation at the decision-making level of government. This is in addition to the aspired 8 main development outcomes set out in the mentioned Family Cohesion Strategy,



according to that, a number of women were appointed to decision-making positions, recently the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, They also participate in the membership of standing committees developing policies and strategies such as the Permanent Population Committee and temporary committees proposing various legislations.

Qatar women also served in some diplomatic posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The beginning of year 2010 witnessed the appointment of the first Qatari woman to the rank of ambassador. In 2011, a female ambassador, the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar in Geneva was appointed. In 2013, a female ambassador was appointed to Croatia. Qatari women also occupy other diplomatic posts at the State's missions abroad. Additionally, there are Qatari female members in many international organisations and committees, especially those in the field of human rights and social development.

Madam / Mr. President,

At the level of international cooperation: International cooperation is one of the most fundamental pillars of the foreign policy of the State of Qatar contained in the Qatar National Vision 2030, whereby the State seeks to promote human rights at the national, regional and international levels, and achieve international peace and security.

The efforts of the State of Qatar to participate in and contribute effectively to international efforts to promote and protect human rights, including women's rights, stem from the principles enshrined in the Permanent Constitution, at the forefront of which is the State's commitment to respect international charters and conventions and work to implement all international conventions to which it is a party. The Constitution also stipulates that the state's foreign policy is guided by the principles of consolidation of international peace and security, respect for human rights, non-violence and the use of force, encouragement of settling international disputes by peaceful means, and cooperating with the peace-loving nations.

In accordance with a report of foreign aid 2010-2011, humanitarian and development aid (governmental and non-governmental) provided by the State of Qatar in the years 2010 to 2011 amounted to 5,337,430.071 Qatar Riyals for 108 countries from different continents of the world. The proportion of this aid is 0.4 % of the GDP of the state in 2010, and it rose to 0.54% in 2011.

The State has continued its policy of openness towards the hosting of conferences and international forums dealing with issues of development, democracy, human rights and the

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promotion of a culture of peace. Every year Qatar hosts “the Doha Forum”, and “Interfaith Conference”, and “America and the Islamic World Forum”. The state has also hosted the “Forum for the Fourth United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in 2011” & “the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women” in 2012. In addition, the country hosted numerous conferences on global trade, support for the Aid for Trade Approach, the “follow-up of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development”, the “International Climate Conference”, the “UNCTAD Conference”, and other global conferences that sought to highlight the importance of supporting international development efforts.

Contribution to Capacity-Building Efforts at the International Level: The efforts of the State of Qatar, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Centre for training and documentation in the field of human rights for South-West Asia and the Arab region, which was created by Resolution 153 of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Center aims to promote human rights, through training, information and documentation, studies and exchange of expertise and cooperation with governments in this regard. The agreement on the Center’s headquarters between the Government of the State of Qatar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was signed in Doha in December 2008. The Center was opened in May 2009. The State of Qatar has provided various forms of support to the center since its inception.

The Center seeks to meet the needs of the geographical area it covers in terms of training and capacity building in the field of human rights. It has organized a lot of training activities and regional consultations on various important issues and United Nations Human Rights mechanisms. It also worked to provide support for the efforts of governments, UN agencies and programs and national institutions for human rights and non-governmental organizations in the region, and to spread education and awareness in the field of promotion and protection of human rights.

In the area of strengthening the positive cooperation of the State of Qatar with the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms, the State worked in accordance with the principles enshrined in its constitution to respect international charters and conventions and to implement all international conventions to which it is a party. This pledge and commitment have resulted in the State providing its periodic reports to the various monitoring mechanisms within the time frame specified by these committees.



The State has also approved the request for a visit submitted by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on Human Trafficking, especially women and children. The level of transparency, openness and cooperation extended by the Qatari government during her visit to the State was well appreciated.

Qatar has taken serious steps towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism since the discussion of the initial report in February 2010. The state has accepted the recommendation calling for extending an open and standing invitation to holders of special procedures. In the wake of this, the State received the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants during November 2013, and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers during January 2014. In addition, it also received many non-governmental human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, which visited the country in 2012, and Amnesty International in 2013, the International Federation of Trade Unions in 2013. On the other hand, the State hosted a regional consultation of stakeholders convened by the independent expert on the impacts of foreign debt in the January / February period 2011.

Madam / Mr. President,

Despite the improvement of legislations and practices witnessed by the State of Qatar and the provision of material resources, there are still some challenges and temporary difficulties facing the State in order to implement the terms of the agreement optimally. These include infancy of the legislative and institutional development, the infancy of the State's relation with the monitoring mechanisms and the technical capacity of the workforce which is still at the stage of development.

I am happy at this juncture to refer to future steps to be taken by the State, especially in the legislative field, including work on the re-promulgation of several legislative tools and reconsideration of others, so that they would be better aligned with the provisions of international conventions on human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW). The following are only examples:

- Draft of Domestic Workers Law .
- Draft of Child Rights law .



- Draft of the rights of the children of Qatari women married to non-Qataris law .
- Review of family law and laws related to violence against women .
- Draft of the litigation procedures in family matters law, which was approved by the Council of Ministers during January 2014.

Several committees are going to be constituted to study the situation of women in the various legislations in order to be more harmonized with the provisions of international conventions. We refer particularly to the committee on the study of the cases of women's access to housing system, the committee on the study of part-time work for women, and the committee on the study of the family court system in the State of Qatar.

**Madam / Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have focused on some critical issues we included in our report and our written responses on the observations of the Committee. We would like to express our hope that the information provided in the report before you and the responses and information that we can provide today would be sufficient for the Committee to assess the State of Qatar's implementation of its obligations under the Convention.

What we have provided are steps on a long journey. The State of Qatar will spare no effort in completing the journey until it has achieved full respect for and effective protection of women's rights as embodied in the Convention, as a key partner in the progress and development.

I thank you for your attention and hope that the discussion of State of Qatar's report would contribute to strengthening its capacity to enforce the provisions of the Convention in order to make the best of Qatari women and safeguard their rights and respect.

Thank you.